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MONTANA PSC'S ROWE IS NEW NARUC PRESIDENT

Public Service Commission member Bob Rowe of Missoula is the new president of the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners, effective November 10. NARUC is the association of state utility regulators.

Rowe was elected first vice president of NARUC last year and assumed the presidency at the group's annual meeting that was held this week in San Antonio, Texas. He will serve as president for one year.

Rowe has been chairman of NARUC's Telecommunications Committee since 1997 and led that committee's efforts to address the complex issues involved with the implementation of the federal Telecommunications Act of 1996, including preserving and expanding universal service, local telephone competition, and telecommunications modernization.

Rowe, 44, was elected to a second term on the PSC in 1996. Prior to joining the PSC, he was a public interest lawyer in Missoula, concentrating on utility law and policy.

In his acceptance speech, Rowe outlined several priorities for his term as President. In particular, he emphasized federal-state efforts to promote deployment of advanced telecom services, such as high-speed Internet access, and a consumer-friendly, state-friendly approach to federal electric competition legislation. Rowe recently proposed a Federal State "Joint Conference on Broadband Access," which was created by the Federal Communications Commission last month.

Rowe's speech, "It's the Customer, Stupid," emphasized competition, universal service, consumer protection and education, technology, and "cooperative federalism" as a model for both telecommunications and energy." The speech is available on request, or on the PSC web page at www.psc.state.mt.us.

Rowe said, "I support workable competition in any area where it can truly develop. I want to make sure ordinary customers are protected and benefited. I believe specific federal energy restructuring legislation is appropriate. However, based on my experience implementing customer choice in Montana, as recently as last week, it is a terribly difficult task to extend the benefits to small customers. For the most basic, practical reasons that is a role for which states are particularly well suited."

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